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ABSTRACT

This program, included in "Effective Reading Programs...," serves approximately 800 four-year-old children enrolled at 26 public schools. The program was begun in 1965, and in 1971 major revisions were made in it. Children attend prekindergarten classes for two and one half hours a day, five days a week. Specific written objectives for cognitive, social, emotional, and psychomotor development are the foundation for instruction, with emphasis on cognitive skills. Broad program goals are development of skills in discrimination, spatial relationship concepts, skills in sequence, and skills in classification. A diagnostic checklist is used to assess each child's entry level and needs, providing continuous feedback on the student's progress. Teaching methods and materials vary, but all teachers use criterion tasks, an activities reference, and a resource file, all locally developed. Underlying all instruction are identification of objectives, diagnosis, documentation, and teaching to meet individual needs. Parents are encouraged to carry out specific activities at home with their children to facilitate learning. (TO)

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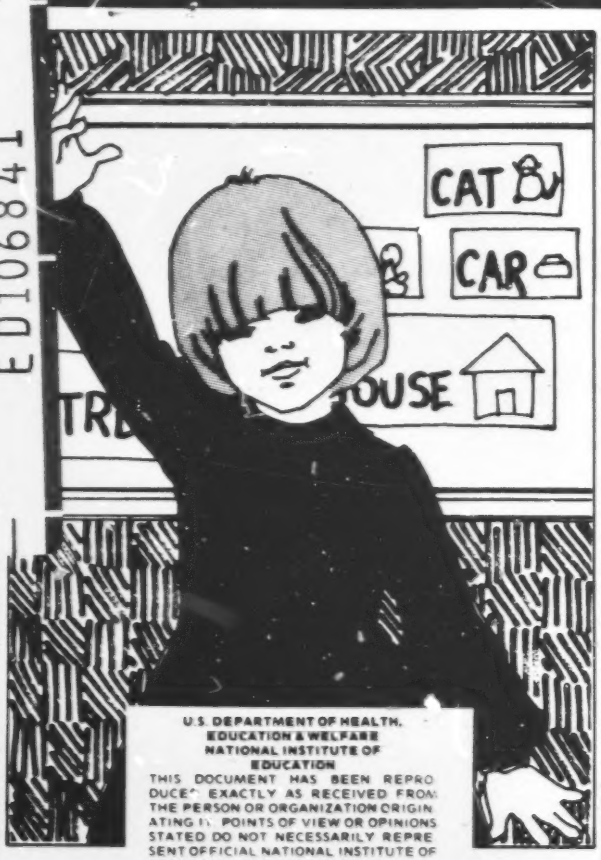

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Primary Language Development

A report from
the Department of Special Program
Development, Columbus Public Schools.
"Serving Children today . . . for tomorrow."

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The Signs of Need

Many children with educational needs lack confidence in their abilities to cope with school tasks. Others may learn at a slower rate than their classmates. Still others may have an undetected physical problem such as poor eyesight or a hearing loss. All of these factors affect children's progress in school. When a child shows disinterest in classroom activities, can't express his ideas or makes insufficient gains in reading and writing, he clearly needs additional help in the skills of communication. Primary Language Development is designed to provide educational experiences which will help him overcome his learning difficulties.

PLD: Help for Children Who Need it Most

Children who are recommended by classroom teachers as having serious learning problems receive consideration for Primary Language Development classes. The final selection of children is determined by test results. Language development teachers serve children whose test scores indicate the greatest need in language skills. To help make individual attention possible, the number of children per teacher is limited to approximately 35. Children who qualify at levels Kindergarten through Grade Three attend PLD classes daily. To foster program continuity from the earliest introduction to school, the Title I Prekindergarten now operates as a component of Primary Language Development.

Built-in Diagnosis, Treatment and Evaluation

The success of any program depends upon its ability to provide for the individual needs of the children it serves. There must be a way to diagnose individual problems and provide specifically designed learning opportunities. Then the learners' progress must be evaluated continuously.

The PLD guidebook, **Plan for Individualized Learning in Primary Language Development,** incorporates the program objectives, suggestions for skill-learning opportunities and a list of related materials. It is used in conjunction with the teacher check lists, which span the range of language skills from level Pre-kindergarten-Kindergarten through Level Three. A series of checks, given before and after learning opportunities, pin-point the specific needs and progress of individual children.

Interest and Challenge: The Crux in learning

The Primary Language Development team respects children's dignity and their ability to grow academically and socially. The learning activities are geared to children's levels of readiness and achievement and stimulate the use of related skills. The variety of opportunities in the guidebook permits a choice for individual challenge. The same skill may be practiced in many activities so that it transfers naturally in its application to reading and writing.

The learning center approach lends itself to acitvities designed to help individuals. As many as three centers may be operating in the language development room while the teacher works with one child. Center activities are usually an outgrowth of small group or individualized instruction. They may consist of simple materials prepared for the application of newly-learned skills. On the other hand, it may be that the children are learning skills independently through the use of tape recorders, projectors and other teaching aids in accordance with activities presented in the guidebook or developed by the teacher.

Reaching the Goal in PLD

Primary Language Development emphasizes independence, responsibility and critical thinking. Strengths are promoted where weaknesses in learning were formerly evident. The PLD goal has been reached when the child has improved his communication skills to permit him to gather knowledge about the world in which he lives through the processes of speaking, listening, observing, reading and writing. It is indeed a happy moment when a child realizes that he has closed the learning gap between himself and his regular classmates.

Dedication, Involvement, Support: Solution to Educational Progress

Success in the Primary Language Development Program is the result of teachers' willingness to try new ideas and become involved in program improvement. In-service meetings provide time for professional study, research and the development of new materials for PLD children. Many teachers have contributed ideas which are included in the program guidebook. Grade level advisory committees represent the teaching staff in the selection of new materials and program revision. Every effort is made to provide meaningful opportunities which will supplement children's regular classroom activities.

The role of parents in PLD is one of support and encouragement. Columbus parents have reacted favorably through the work of the Parent Advisory Council, parent coordinators and teachers. Classroom visits by parents encourage pride and greater effort by children and teachers. To show that each person cares is another example of the power to communicate through language . . . the key to understanding, to learning, to opportunity.

For information on any Title I or DP program call the Department of Special Program Development at 225-2720.

Language is the Key . . .

. . . to understanding, to learning, to opportunity. We hear language, react to it, and reply. We associate its sounds and interpret its meaning. We form its symbols to express our thoughts. We observe the language of life around us—a bird's call, the roar of the freeway, a child's laughter, the gestures of man. We hear and speak it, see and read it, think and write it—and in doing these things, we accumulate knowledge. Language is the basis of learning, that force in life which communicates, regardless of the subject or circumstance.

Certainly children who have not yet acquired the skill to use language as a stepping stone to knowledge are disadvantaged. It is the purpose of Primary Language Development to equalize language power among Columbus children.

Title I: A Source of Assistance

The Federal "Elementary and Secondary Education Act" challenges school systems throughout the country to provide better ways of meeting children's educational needs. The Primary Language Development Program (PLD) qualifies for ESEA Title I funds. It operates in elementary schools where the greatest number of children need assistance in overcoming their language disadvantages.

Department of Special Program Development
Division of Instruction
Columbus Public Schools
John Ellis, Superintendent

COLUMBUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Printed with ESEA Title I Funds

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PROGRAM RATIONALE: BASIS FOR PROGRAM GOALS

Rationale

The instructional model is based upon the assumption that adequate reading behaviors are linked unconditionally with initial and increasingly more sophisticated skills in language development.

Language is acquired first through the ear, becomes verbal through representational thought and sound production, and visual through the recognition of symbols which represent units of thought and speech. The language skills are inseparable.

Intervention techniques in the auditory, tactile, verbal and visual development of the language skills should be applied simultaneously. The levels at which these skills will develop should overlap to provide for individual differences.

BROAD GOALS: BASIS FOR PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The position that language skills are inseparable precludes the isolation of auditory, tactile, verbal and visual application in learning activities. Four major categories, as follow, synthesize the perceptual skills and provide a basis for broad program goals:

1. The Development of Skills in Discrimination
   a. The learner will be able to discriminate gross to finer sounds, objects, pictures, letters, words, ideas, meanings and verbal and printed messages.
2. The Development of Spatial Relationship Concepts

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a. The learner will be able to position sounds, objects, symbols, letters, words, meanings and sentences in relation to other sounds, objects, symbols, letters, words, meanings and sentences.

3. The Development of Skills in Sequence

   a. The learner will be able to sequence the order of the procedures, mathematical values, ideas, meanings, and environmental events represented by sounds, objects, pictures, letters, numerals and words.

4. The Development of Skills in Classification

   a. The learner will be able to classify sounds, objects, symbols, letters, words, ideas and meanings in the interpretation of verbal and printed messages.

The broad goals generalize the program intent and establish the categorized components of language development.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES: SPECIFIC PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The purpose of the objectives is to clarify the intent of the program for which they are written. What is it that we expect children to be able to do when the instruction is completed? The program objectives should answer the question in relation to specific skills. The composite of objectives should present a clear picture of the program expectations in terms of the planning and execution of activities. The teacher will

have planned, often with the child's assistance, and the learner will have executed the plans.

The "givens" in the primary language development objectives express the opportunities that children must have in order to acquire the skills expected. An expressed given is in terms of activities or materials. In the final analysis, the objective will have stated the skill that the learner will have acquired as a result of the instructional opportunities and the materials or activities which will have been available to him in his pursuit of the skill.

The specific instructional objectives and related activities are arranged in overlapping groups to provide for the individual needs of children in levels prekindergarten through three.

GOALS IN PSYCHOMOTOR DEVELOPMENT

A major consideration in primary language development is the appropriateness of the program to the individual needs of the child. The psychomotor development among young children is likely to be highly individualized. Since psychomotor readiness is a factor in the realization of successful school experiences, it is the responsibility of the program to provide developmental opportunities. Observation will reveal the children's individual needs which require development beyond the "built in" opportunities provided in the specific guidebook activities.

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lace, tie, pour, paint, color, cut, manipulate and maneuver given materials and objects, the child will be able to coordinate eye and hand movement.

2. Given eye-hand coordination, the child will be able to follow oral directions to hold a primary pencil in his dominant hand and guide it to trace or reproduce given designs, letters or numerals, and to satisfy his aesthetic needs in painting, coloring or handcraft.

3. Given natural opportunities to step, walk, run, crawl, jump, hop, skip, climb, bend, stoop, balance, and stretch, the child will be able to coordinate those movements in tasks requiring specific patterns or directions.

4. Given opportunities to hear and reproduce speech sounds, and to articulate in relation to his experiences, the child will be able to coordinate speech, eye-hand movement and body control to accomplish the tasks in related objectives.

AFFECTIVE GOALS: OPEN DOOR TO POSITIVE BEHAVIORS

The Primary Language Development philosophy recognizes the worth and growth capacity of the children served by the program. The broad premise is that, in order to develop positive attitudes and values, children must have opportunities to discriminate acceptable and unacceptable behavior in terms of their effects upon the individual. It is fitting that the program's affective statements should reflect

confidence in children's ability to adapt to social and academic challenges.

1. Given social and instructional opportunities to test his ideas and knowledge, the child will be able to develop values, responsibilities and independence on the basis of the trial outcomes.

   a. Given equal participation in group activities, the child will be able to understand the tasks and privileges related to group membership.

      1) The child will contribute to group efforts.

      2) The child will accept responsibility for the approved behavior in given situations.

      3) The child will practice the approved social amenities.

      4) The child will show appreciation for the group opportunities and privileges extended to him.

      5) The child will defend democratic principles in work and play.

   b. Given respect and constructive reactions to his efforts in group participation, the child will be able to accept himself as an effective group member.

      1) The child will realize that he has both strengths and weaknesses in social and academic areas.

      2) The child will strive to meet the strengths and overcome the weaknesses.

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4) The child will determine his right to freedom and choice on the self-evaluated basis of past performance.

- Given self-acceptance, the child will be able to accept and appreciate his peers and associates.

1) The child will understand that language and customs may differ among people.

2) The child will show respect for the potential in other persons.

3) The child will show empathy in his relations with other persons.

The child's affective growth in school is closely related to his success in the tasks he undertakes. His willingness to venture into the academic "unknown" will depend upon the appreciation demonstrated by teachers for his experiential knowledge.

The primary language development position is that, given opportunities to draw upon this knowledge, the child will be able to associate ideas within his own conceptual framework and to accommodate extended relationships through inference-making. Consequently, the climate for

critical thinking is set by the tenor and openness of the teacher's questions.

The concern for this aspect of child development at the primary levels has prompted the teaching staff to formulate general questions that can be selected with regard to their appropriateness in a variety of teaching-learning situations. The questions precede Level Pre-K-Kindergarten in A Plan for Individualized Learning in Primary Language Development.

THE SOURCE OF SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The history of Primary Language Development shows a progressively greater concern for the clarification of program goals. Formerly, the goals were stated in terms of expected pupil behaviors at pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and primary grade levels. The specific instructional objectives are a composite of goal statements derived from regular and special programs in language development. The direction is toward more precise terminology in recognition of a shared teacher-learner responsibility in education.

Seventy-seven objectives (excluding psychomotor and affective statements) were derived from the program goals. Every objective is interrelated among the four broad goals, but each is more initially related to one or another of the goal categories (similarities and differences, position, sequence or classification).

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of Plan for Individualized Learning, consideration was given to a division of objective parts, which would increase the total number. The majority decision was to retain the important relationships within the objectives. The separation of skills for evaluation purposes was accomplished through a block division on the teacher checklist.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The individual differences among the children served by the Primary Language Development Program demand a broad scope in learning experiences. The instructional objectives (with related activities) arranged on the overlapping levels "Pre-Kindergarten-Kindergarten", "Kindergarten-One" and "One-Three" provide a scale on which every child's readiness and progress can be charted. Rather then a sequence of learning, the arrangement implies the need for transitional experiences in the broad goal areas at each level. While the same objective might be included at all levels, the requirements of the objectives-in-common reflect an increasing difficulty in skill. The assumption is that skills become more permanently established as transfer is achieved from one level of difficulty to the next.

THE PROGRAM GUIDEBOOK

A Plan for Individualized Learning in Primary Language Development is the program guidebook. At each learning level, the order in which teachers should follow the objectives is relative to children's needs. Since the needs are individual, it is unlikely that all children will benefit from the same learning experiences at a given time. It is an entirely realistic assumption

that children (for example) on the kindergarten-one level should engage initially in activities designed for the pre-kindergarten-kindergarten level. By the same token, when individual children have acquired the skills implicit in the designated "criterion tasks"at the (for example) kindergarten-one level, those children should move to the next-higher level.

Teacher planning is implied under the column "The Child Should". The objective "givens" are described in the activity procedures and under the column "Materials". The selection by teachers of appropriate questions to initiate instruction will enable the child to become self-directed in his execution of suggested activities.

"Activity" connotes involvement beyond specific oral questions and answers or pencil and paper assignments. Plans which encourage the child to channel both his mental and physical energies toward the task at hand stimulate interest and effective learning. The variety of activities relating to the skill development in a specific objective permits a choice of learning center opportunities by individual children.

THE LEARNING CENTER: DESIGN FOR INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT

The primary language development learning center focuses upon individual needs. Equipment such as a tape recorder and head phones are used frequently. However, the centers are more characterized by their simplicity than by elaborate materials. Plan for Individualized Learning provides the basic activities for learning centers. One child or several might be engaged in

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A learning center has unlimited means to provide transfer through the reinforcement of skills in different contexts. Equally important, however, is its potential for independent problem solving through the use of materials that provide immediate feedback. If the learning center is reduced to "busy work", its value is no greater than traditional seatwork. The language development staff emphasizes the use of learning centers to instruct children individually in meaningful, enjoyable ways. A Plan for Individualized Learning in Primary Language Development contributes to this concept as a resource and guidebook for teachers.

TEACHER CHECKLISTS: CONTINUOUS EVALUATION

The guidebook-related teacher checklists provide another source of direction for instructional planning. Used effectively by language development teachers Pre-K through Three in conjunction with the criterion tasks, the checklists provide continuous feedback regarding the children's readiness and progress.

The three checklists are identified by level. Objectives for the specific overlapping level are numbered and stated in brief at the top of the checklist. On the left are spaces for the names of children who attend language development class during the same time period. Following the name spaces and below the abbreviated objectives are blocks in which the teacher will record + or - to indicate the children's current

progress with regard to the objectives. Since there is no failure in language development, the - symbol indicates that a child has not been checked in the particular area due to the difficulty of the skill or that he needs more time to accomplish the related tasks. The + symbol indicates that the criterion has been met in at least one context and that the skill will be checked for transfer throughout the school year. The checklists should be used as follows.

1) Level pre-kindergarten-kindergarten children should be pre-checked before November 1, continuously evaluated throughout the year and post-checked during May.

   a) The criterion tasks to be used for pre and post-checking are located in the resource file. These should be reserved for checking purposes only. Record plus or minus (+ or -) in the appropriate block for each of the 44 objectives on the Pre-K checklist. If the skill is accomplished during the post-check, the symbols should be circled (⊕ or ⊖ or ⊘) to differentiate them from the pre-check. When a child has accomplished the skill during the time between pre and post-checks, a check mark should be placed across the minus symbol (✓).

   b) By mid-year or soon after, some children may have completed all criterion tasks successfully at the pre-kindergarten-kindergarten level. Those children should be placed on the kindergarten-one level and should engage in the objective-related activities for that level.

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The kindergarten-one criterion tasks should be used as a post-check.

2) Level kindergarten-one objectives and activities overlap the previous level generously to compensate readiness needs among children who have not had the benefits of pre-kindergarten-kindergarten experiences. For this reason, 64 objectives appear on the K-One checklist.

   a) The criterion tasks for pre and post-checking are located in the K-One section of the resource file. These tasks should be reserved for checking purposes only. Record plus or minus (+ or -) in the appropriate block for each of the 64 objectives on the short and long checklists. If the skill is accomplished during the post-check, the symbol should be circled (⊕ or ⊖ or ⊘) to differentiate them from the pre-check. When a child has accomplished a skill during the time between the pre and post-checks, a check mark should be placed across the minus symbol (✓).

   b) Some children will have completed the kindergarten-one criterion tasks successfully during the school year. The circled ⊕ should be used in the checklist blocks to indicate the completion. The children should then be placed on the one-three level and should engage in objective-related activities for that level. The One-Three checklist and criterion tasks should be used for post-checking.

3) At the beginning of the year, level one-three children should be pre-checked in accordance with the Kindergarten-One checklist and criterion tasks.

. . . a) Some children may have pre-checked successfully in accordance with the kindergarten-one criterion tasks. The circled ⊕ should be used in the checklist blocks to indicate the completion. The children should then be placed on the one-three level and should be checked periodically and post-checked according to the One-Three checklist. If the skill is accomplished during the post-check, the symbols should be circled (⊕ or ⊖ or ⊘) to differentiate them from the pre-check. The criterion tasks are located in the One-Three section of the resource file. These task. should be reserved for checking purposes only. When a child has accomplished the skill during the time between pre and post-checks, a check mark should be placed across the minus symbol (⊖).

b) Individual differences may indicate the need of some children to work at two levels. Many of the objectives are common to the kindergarten-one and one-three levels. The less difficult activities for an objective at level kindergarten-one might be substituted for the same objective with more difficult activities at level one-three. However, the child should be checked successful on the One-Three checklist only after he has completed the more difficult criterion task (One-Three).

The use of the checklists offers several advantages for children and teachers.

1. The criterion tasks can be administered and recorded during the normal classroom instruction without program interruption.

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2. The objective-related criterion tasks are diagnostic. The teacher can respond immediately to the needs of individual children. There is no need to wait for "formal" testing, which is usually too late for the diagnosis and correction of learning problems.

3. The procedures help eliminate the fear of formal evaluation for both teachers and children.

4. The results provide a means of self-evaluation for both teachers and children.

5. Each succeeding year, the class checklist, prepared by the teacher after post-checking, will provide a record from which the next teacher may initiate individualized instruction.

An approved individual checklist is available to teachers for use in children's school records. Only the approved list should be used in records for school files or sent to another school when a child moves.

One copy of the teacher checklist for each class served by the language development teacher is requested by the project staff for research purposes. The pre-check copies should be submitted on November 1 and the post-check copies on the last school-day in May. This request is in the interest of continuous program improvement through a better understanding of children's development in the language skills.

Questioning: A Matter of Philosophy

What kinds of questions should teachers ask? Are questions always questions? How do questions relate to our beliefs about the social, emotional and educational growth of children?

The Primary Language Development staff is especially concerned about the well-being of children and how teacher behavior affects their dignity, self-respect and potential for success in school and beyond. Generally, the questions asked and the statements made should reflect this attitude, should depend upon the individual child and should refer indirectly to the subject at hand to stimulate critical thinking. Consequently, the questions in Plan for Individualized Learning are kept to a minimum, while the activities format implies the teacher's role in eliciting answers from children.

The staff recognizes the importance of direct questions as a means of gathering vital information and checking the growth of children in specific skills. The latter is particularly beneficial to teachers with regard to their own sense of accomplishment in teaching children.

The following questions and statements are recommended by the Primary Language Development team when teachers aim to give children maximum opportunities in their pursuit of extended knowledge.

Open-en

1. What would you call
2. I like what you did this in another way
3. What if you changed
4. What do you see in
5. Tell me why you pla (pictures) together group them?
6. Where could you go you do if .....?
7. How did that make y
8. Why would we use th
9. Where could we use
10. How are these objec (different)?
11. What else is happen
12. What do you think t
13. What do you suppose
14. What would people d
15. What do you plan to
16. What do you think w
17. What can we do to m
18. Is there another wa
19. How would you tell looks and feels lik
20. Who would use (or n
21. What would he do wi
22. What might have mad
23. What do you think i
24. Tell me about this.
25. Show me (tell) how
26. You're working very you did this.
27. I wonder why that h
28. Describe the sound

Questioning: A Matter of Philosophy

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Open-ended Questions

1. What would you call this?
2. I like what you did, how can you use this in another way?
3. What if you changed this?
4. What do you see in this picture?
5. Tell me why you placed these objects (pictures) together; how else could you group them?
6. Where could you go if .....? What would you do if .....?
7. How did that make you feel?
8. Why would we use this?
9. Where could we use these?
10. How are these objects (pictures) alike (different)?
11. What else is happening in the picture?
12. What do you think this might be called?
13. What do you suppose this would do if .....?
14. What would people do if .....?
15. What do you plan to do next?
16. What do you think will happen?
17. What can we do to make this work?
18. Is there another way we could do it?
19. How would you tell someone what this looks and feels like?
20. Who would use (or need) this?
21. What would he do with it?
22. What might have made that sound?
23. What do you think is in this (bag, box)?
24. Tell me about this.
25. Show me (tell) how you did this.
26. You're working very hard, tell me how you did this.
27. I wonder why that happened.
28. Describe the sound you hear.